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CREATIVE APPROACHES TO TUTORING, FOR USE IN THE Y.E.S. SUMMER PROGRAM, 1966.

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SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF NEW TUTORING TECHNIQUES AND MATERIALS THAT ARE CONSIDERED MORE SENSITIVE THAN CONVENTIONAL METHODS WERE OFFERED IN THIS GUIDE. SOME OF THE METHODS WERE (1) USING COMIC BOOKS, (2) HAVING THE TUTEE CREATE HIS OWN MATERIALS, (3) THE "DEAR ABBY" TECHNIQUE, (4) WRITING A "HIPTIONARY," AND (5) ASKING THE STUDENT TO DEVELOP HIS OWN VIGNETTES. SUGGESTIONS WERE MADE FOR WAYS TO DISCOVER THE INTERESTS OF THE TUTEE ON WHICH TO BASE TUTORING ACTIVITIES. THIS DOCUMENT IS ALSO AVAILABLE FROM THE YOUTH EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, POST OFFICE BOX 1168, DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA 27702. (JL)

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# CREATIVE APPROACHES TO TUTORING

For Use In The Y.E.S. Summer Program, 1966

Lowell Dodge

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# INTRODUCTION

Tutors everywhere are fed up with conventional tutoring materials. The materials being used in many tutoring programs fail to make a connection with the tutee. Materials which tutors have judged inadequate in this respect include school textbooks, SRA materials, published workbooks (even those with pictures), and with some students anything that appears on a printed page.

This paper attempts to suggest some fresh alternatives. Some of the approaches listed on the following pages have already been tried with some success by tutors in North Carolina. Maybe none of the approaches will work with your particular situation, but perhaps some of them will suggest to you ways in which you may be creative with your student.

We hope that this list will expand during the summer as you develop approaches which you feel are creative. We would appreciate it very much if you could pass on to us ideas for inclusion in revised versions of this paper. Attached to the end of this paper are sheets you can use for this purpose.

## I. CRAZY THINGS TO DO DURING A TUTORING SESSION

### A. Plugging into your tutee's interests

Students at Brevard College have had excellent luck with this activity. At the beginning of the tutoring session, tell your tutee that he has $50.00 to spend during the tutoring session. Tell him he can spend it on anything he wants. Then take a walk into town or into a shopping area where there are reasonable alternatives, and see what he spends his money on. Have him keep track with a pad and pencil how much money he has left after each purchase. Since this is a fairly good way to learn about your tutee's interests, it may be an activity which you might undertake during one of the first sessions with your tutee. It also provides a chance to discuss with your tutee things such as the difference between necessities and luxuries, techniques of comparative shopping, and the difference between durable goods such as a fishing rod, and perishable goods such as an ice cream cone. Curiously enough some tutors in Brevard found that their students decided to save a portion of their hypothetical $50.00.

### B. Imagination Walk

Take a walk with your tutee and make something out of it. Tutors have used casual walks to sharpen the powers of expression and observation of their tutees. Examples:

1. You spot a lonely piece of grass coming up out of a crack in the sidewalk, and you ask your student, "How do you think that blade of grass feels?"

2. You spot an individual in a group or walking along the sidewalk, and ask the tutee to make a guess as to what kind of character the person is. This approach can get interesting if once in a while you can spot a person on the other side of the street whom you know, then ask your student why they think the person is the way they have described.

3. Get your student to use his senses effectively and to put into words what these senses mean, such as by having your student compare the difference in moods created first by the smell of a furniture store and second by the smell of a bakery.

4. Some tutors use walks for tutoring reading more effectively than they use workbooks. Reading signs and getting at the meaning behind signs which one encounters in any city has much more immediate pay-off for many students than reading in workbooks.

5. The exchange game. Have your tutee take you to a place he thinks you have never been and then have him tell you why he selected the place. Then you take him to a place you think he has never been and let him know why it is an important place for you.

C. Tutee Map-Making

A good way to learn of your student's concept of his world, and to get him to practice symbolizing on paper something he has in his mind, is to get him to draw a map of things important to him in his neighborhood. You might start, for instance, by having him chart the route from his home to the place where he is being tutored, and to point out things along the way that are important, such as a candy machine, where the cops hang out, location of a friend's house, etc. If need be, you can start out with a grid pattern of the streets or make a project out of filling in a map or extending a map by actually footing it about town. Tutors who wish to extend their students' concept of the world about them can then work with their student on showing how other points of interest outside of the immediate neighborhood in the city relate to the part the student knows best. Then expand from city to state, etc. One tutor went so far as to take a far away place which had aroused the interest of the student, locate it on the map, and plan the details of a trip to the place including going to a travel agent and picking up brochures, investigating plane fares, boat fares, and even visiting stores to shop for clothing which would be appropriate for the location.

D. Make Deals With Your Tutee

Examples:

1. "You bring some magazine or book about something you think I know nothing about, and I'll bring in something you know nothing about." One tutor who tried this brought in something about whales only to find out that her tutee had brought in a book about snakes. They both learned from each other during that session.

2. Have your tutee bring to the tutoring session five words which he thinks you will not know in exchange for five words you select which you think the tutee might not know. You may be surprised at the outcome.

The general theory behind making deals is that it involves both you and your student on an equal footing in an activity which enables you both to learn more about each other.

## II. IDEAS FOR NEW MATERIALS AND NEW TECHNIQUES FOR TUTORING SESSIONS

### A. Use Comic Books

The following story illustrates the point behind using comics:

> A group of ninth-grade boys refused to read in English class. When asked why, they unanimously concurred that the books they were reading were "phoney". What follows is a dialogue between a teacher and a class on this point.[1]

Teacher: What do you mean "phoney"?
Class: Corny.
Teacher: What does "corny" mean?
Class: (no response)
Teacher: Can you give me an example of what isn't "corny"? Say in a T.V. program perhaps?
Class: "Naked City".
Teacher: Why isn't "Naked City" corny or phoney?
Class: Well, one Sunday you see a kid with his mother walking to church, and the next day he gets into trouble.
Teacher: Why isn't that phoney?
Class: Because he isn't all bad or all good. He isn't one-way.
Teacher: Are you saying then, that a one-way character is phoney?
Class: Yeah!.....If you'd give the kids in this school the choice, they'd all read comic books.
Teacher: Why?
Class: They're a lot more fun.
Teacher: But I thought you said one-way characters were "phoney". I never heard of Batman doing anything nasty.
Class: The big difference is we know the comic books are going to be phoney, and that's why they're fun. But the stuff you give us in school you tell us isn't phoney and it always is.

### B. Have your tutees create their own materials. The SWAP Approach:

The Student Woodlawn Area Project in Chicago has its tutees talk in a more or less unsupervised atmosphere into a tape recorder, asking them to describe interesting incidents in their lives. SWAP then types up the

[1] From English Journal, Volumn 54, No. 4, April 1965, "Phoney Literature" by Gerald Weinstein and Mario Fantini

stories and mimeographs them. These materials are on topics of interest to the tutees, but most important they are in the language of the tutees. Youth Educational Services has a series of these SWAP stories available to all projects to serve as an example of the way in which this approach can work.

C. The Dear Abby Gimmick

If you are working with a girl or a group of girls, try this: Take letters written into the love-lorn experts, such as Ann Landers, Dear Abby, and the rest, from frustrated teenagers. Give only the letters themselves to the tutees, then have them compose their own answers. This is often the way to get girls into the mood for some expository writing. Many times the girls will outdo the experts with their answers. You might have different girls compete with each other for the best answer, or compare the answers of the girls to the answers provided by the experts. If the answers your girls give are not perfect, that is fine. Then you can work on expression, punctuation, grammar, spelling, etc.

D. The Hiptionary

Your tutoring efforts should be an attempt to add to, rather than replace the language your tutee uses. There is a major movement afoot in American education to respect the dialects of American minority groups and to build on them rather than condemning them as incorrect.

A simple project which tutors can undertake in line with this thinking, suggested by Frank Riessman, is setting up a hiptionary in a systematic fashion. Everytime your tutee uses one of his "rich and colorful words" put it on a card, then work with him in discovering in the dictionary synonyms from formal English. The effects are several. First of all, the process of putting together the hiptionary attaches a new importance to the tutee's own language. Second of all, it is a subtle way of exposing your tutee to a great many new "English" word definitions for the "hip" words your tutee may have been using for quite a while. Tutors who have used this approach find that their students have a lot of fun using their new-found "big words".

E. Develop Your Own Vignettes

The vignette must zero in on the language and experience of your tutee. You might even illustrate it with drawings or photographs. Here is an example:[2]

[2]From English Journal, Volumn 54, No. 4, April 1965, "Phoney Literature" by Gerald Weinstein and Mario Fantini

THE DANCE

Jimmy had spent about an hour in front of the mirror getting ready for this dance. He was wearing his best suit, a smart three-buttoned slim job. Even so, he still didn't feel right. He was kind of jumpy.

The auditorium wasn't too crowded, but Mary Ann was there. She looked real great with that pink lace dress and those pink high-heels.

All of the boys were standing together at one end and the girls were at the other.

"Hey, Jimmy!" Frank shouted, "You're looking pretty cool. Why don't you grab a chick and start swinging?"

"I would, man, but I don't want to wear out my dancin' shoes."

"Well, why do you have dancin' shoes if you're not going to use them?"

"Look who's talking. I don't see you spinning around the floor with anyone."

"Oh, man, I wouldn't waste my time with any of these babes. They're from nowhere."

"Sure, sure, I know."

All the while he was talking, Jimmy kept watching Mary Ann out of the corner of his eyes. She was dancing with another girl. The boys were still gathered in one corner, laughing and shouting wise remarks to the girls across the floor. Not one was dancing with a girl.

"If only I had enough guts to ask her to dance," Jimmy said to himself. "But it would be real rough. I'd have to walk across that big floor with everybody looking bug-eyed at me. The guys would sure make some fuss about it. And then suppose she didn't want to dance with me after I asked her? I'd feel so low-down I'd have to crawl out of here. Darn, I don't know what to do!"

He thought of himself dancing with her.....holding her real close in his arms. He became more shaky than ever.

"Maybe," he thought, "if I just walked over real cool and said, 'Let's dance, baby,' she wouldn't have a chance to say no."

Before he had a chance to move, Tommy and Neil grabbed him by the arms. They pulled him over to the rest of the boys.

"C'mon, Jimmy, we're all going over to Marshall Street..... This thing here is just too square, man."

Jimmy found himself strolling out of the school with the boys. "Whew," he told himself, "where am I going? I didn't get all dressed up just to hang on the corner. But.....I guess I can't go back now. Mary Ann,.....you're a doll. Well.....maybe next time."

Questions for discussion?

Why didn't Jimmy dance with Mary Ann? If Jimmy wanted to stay at the dance, why did he leave with the boys? Do you believe that Frank really didn't want to waste his time with the girls? Where do you think this dance took place? In an elementary, junior high, senior high, or college? Why? Do you think Jimmy will dance with Mary Ann next time? Why?

Vocabulary development

Several words in this story might form the basis of a hiption-ary such as cool, square, bug-eyed, "from nowhere", etc.

F. Role-Playing

Role-playing connects with the "physical learning style" of poor children. When these children translate into action something that is written in a story or included in a discussion it takes on much more meaning for them. They become much more articulate about a situation after it has been translated into a series of physical acts. The beauty of role-playing is that you don't have to be any kind of a professional to pull it off; the benefits of role-playing stem primarily from the discussion which follows the role-play, and one aspect of that discussion usually centers around ways in which the role-play might have been more authentic or more skillfully done. If you feel just a bit uneasy about undertaking a role-play, as many of us do, just dive into one head first. You will be amazed how much fun it is.

G. Educational Games: Role-Playing Real Life

Youth Educational Services is presently working with a series of life-games developed by James Coleman, a Johns Hopkins University sociologist. Four of these games are Career, High School, The Great Game of Legislature, and Consumer. The games, which are in use at the North Carolina Advancement School, tend to captivate the students for long periods of time. They thrust the students into real-life situations such as deciding what kind of college to go to (in the "Career" game). Points are assigned for various alternatives, and students who select the alternatives which are the most appropriate for their own situation get the most points.

Tutors interested in exploring the possibility of using these games should contact Lowell Dodge. Difficulties we will have to overcome in using these games in tutoring are:

1. The games will carry over a series of from five to fifteen tutoring sessions,and, therefore, assume a consistency in tutor and tutee attendance.
2. The games work most effectively with groups. Therefore, tutors having just one student will have to join with other tutors to make the games work well.
3. The games are still in the experimental stage. Tutors planning to use them will need to spend considerable time in advance mastering the ideas behind the games and plotting the specific techniques of applying the games to their particular situation.

H. Reading Games and Math Games

Youth Educational Services now has available short compendiums of both reading and math games designed to make these subjects more interesting to tutor. Please write to the Y.E.S. office in Durham for these materials. Also available is a series of reading tests (short word-recognition tests) which will help you in determining the reading level of your student, if you must use tests.

I. Pittsburg Action-Housing Tutor Guide

Y.E.S. now has available an ingenious guide for tutors devised in Pittsburg which outlines close to 100 techniques for learning from everyday situations. Write Y.E.S. if you would like examples of this approach. One example is as follows:

Purpose: Teaching Children to Stop to Think

Talk with students about the function of a radio aside from playing records by groups like The Rolling Stones. Have students realize the radio is helpful during an emergency. Was there ever an emergency that caused them to think and act quickly? Have them tell you what they would do in the following emergencies:

1. If you discovered a fire in school.
2. If you were washing dishes in a restaurant and dropped a plate on the floor.
3. If you saw a car parked on a hill beginning to move slightly because the brake was loose.
4. If your best friend asked to copy your answers on an arithmetic test.
5. If you found a pocketbook containing a $10 bill.

J. Books with Negroes in them

Youth Educational Services has collected a cross-section of the newer books available written about Negroes, Negro History, or containing pictures of Negroes. There are not enough copies to go around for every project, but Y.E.S. plans to loan its present supply out on a first-come first-served basis. Many of these materials are very inexpensive. We suggest that you have anybody wishing to contribute to the Summer Program assist by purchasing some of these materials. A two-page summary listing titles, publishers, publishers' addresses, and prices is available on request from Youth Educational Services.

K. Frank Riessman

Writings by Frank Riessman available from the Y.E.S. office are full of ideas for activities in tutoring. Some of these are mentioned in this paper, but there are many more. If you are interested, write to Y.E.S. and request Riessman's "Tutoring the Disadvantaged Child" and "The Culturally Deprived Child, A New View".

Mail to: Lowell Dodge
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Post Office Box 1168
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## CREATIVE TUTORING TECHNIQUES

You can help Y.E.S. add to the ideas in this paper by writing up new techniques which have worked well for you in tutoring:

1. What new technique or approach did you try?

2. Why do you think it worked well?

. Do you have any special recommendations for other tutors who might wish to try it out?